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A PLEA FOR THE SEAL.

No one could have walked the streets during the late winter and spring without observing the prevalence of seal-skin jackets as an article of female attire. The wearing of skins, no matter of what kind, as closely fitting garments, is of course seriously detrimental to health, by excluding exhalation from the body. But on that we are not going to expatiate, well knowing that where female fashions are concerned, all remonstrance is useless. What we propose to speak about is the extraordinary trade in seal-skins which has sprung up in consequence of the universal mania for dressing in these articles. We all know that skins cannot be manufactured like calico, but come from the backs of animals, and that at best there is a limited supply. Hence the prodigious prices given for seal-skin furs. When procured, the skins are usually, in the first instance, sent to London, where periodically large sales at auction take place, which are attended by dealers from all parts of England and the continent. A few months ago, at one of these sales, two seal-skins brought as much as eighty-four pounds—the highest price, it is believed, ever attained in the London market.

Seals, we need hardly say, cannot be reared like sheep, nor do they naturally congregate on sea-coasts in a temperate climate. They are to be found in some of the northern British isles, particularly Shetland, but only in small numbers. To procure them in abundance, we need to go much farther into Borean regions, such as Greenland and the north-west of Norway. Incited by the mercantile demand, the seal-fishery in the North Sea has latterly been carried on upon a scale so extensive as to threaten the annihilation of the animal. Horrid cruelties are practised. The seals which have just brought forth their young are killed wholesale, leaving their helpless progeny to perish. The custom has been to begin the seal-fishing—more properly seal-killing—in March; but reasons have been shewn for postponing the butchery till April. Female seals,

about to produce young, are swimming about in great numbers, preparing to take up their temporary abode on the ice, over shoals frequented by their favourite food. But the vessels are lying in wait, and begin their ruthless work. In two or three days, thousands of young seals are heard piteously crying after their slaughtered mothers. Even supposing the mothers to be as valuable as usual for their skins and oil, such is not the case with their poor helpless progeny, who are worthless when newly born. So destructive in this respect was the fishing twelve months ago, that the captains feared that the number of young left in a condition to furnish a supply for the present season (1875) would be seriously diminished. They all agreed that they committed this error, but each excused himself because the others did it. The difficulty is to get a united action among the different nationalities engaged in this cruel and destructive procedure.

Moved by the prospects of a ruined trade, as well, perhaps, as by motives of humanity, the proprietors of sealing-vessels in Norway, Scotland, and other countries have had some conferences on the subject. The question has also been under consideration by the Board of Trade and Foreign Office. It has been proposed to have a close time; but unhappily there are different opinions as to when the close time should terminate. A common opinion is, that April 5th and May 15th should be named as the opening and closing days respectively. The Swedish minister for foreign affairs, M. Björnstjerna, has stated that the Norwegian vessels from Tönsberg and Christiansund are about equal in number to the Scotch from Dundee and Peterhead; that the chief seat of the fishery is at and near Jan Mayen Island; and that the produce of the fishery is gradually lessening, owing to the reckless mode of conducting it, by the killing of the mothers before the pups are old enough to cater for themselves. (We may here remark that Jan Mayen Island is situated between Iceland and Spitzbergen, and is described by Lord Dufferin in his *Letters from High Latitudes*.) M. Björnstjerna points out that a treaty between England

and Sweden would not alone suffice, because sealers belonging to other nations would not be bound by it; and suggests that the Earl of Derby should open communications with all the maritime governments interested in the matter. When, early in the present year, the resolutions arrived at by the Dundee Conference were communicated to the Norwegian sealing owners and captains, the latter almost unanimously declared that the opening date above named was too late, and the closing date too soon; that a much longer time than forty-one days may safely be allowed for the fishing; that most of the pups are born about March 22d or 23d; and that, if the opening of the fishery were delayed beyond the 1st of April, it would frequently happen that all chance of a successful result would be sacrificed, either by the breaking up of the ice or the setting in of warm weather. Still more decidedly did they assert that May 15th was too early to close the fishing, as there are numbers of seals well worth capturing for some weeks after that date. Out of twenty-six Norwegian owners and captains, twenty-four recommended the dates April 1st and June 30th—thus giving ninety-one days of open fishing instead of the Scotch proposal of forty-one days! A woful difference this, shewing how much has still to be done before the experienced doctors will be able to agree about the mode of treating a malady which they all admit to exist. A commercial reason is assignable for the difference of opinion here expressed. The Scotch vessels are mostly larger, and employ more hands than the Norwegian; the captains wish to get their seal-fishing over as soon as they can, in order to proceed afterwards to fish for whales—an arrangement which does not so well suit the Norwegians. There have been some negotiations with a view to a remedy during the present year, but as yet nothing is done. The slaughter goes on as far as it can be effected, and will probably do so, till the colonies of seals in the North Sea are exterminated. The sufferings that meanwhile must be experienced by the poor motherless seals, wailing for food, and calling, we may say, for pity, are too painful to contemplate. The wearers of seal-skin jackets do not seem to be aware of the cruelties inflicted on these harmless and unfortunate animals.

So much for what we may call the ordinary seal-trade. We turn from it to give some account of the method of seal capture and traffic in the Pribylov Islands, a group connected with the province of Alaska, which was purchased by the United States from Russia in 1867. Here, things appear to be better managed. Although the Pribylov Islands embrace only an area of less than sixty square miles, they have, up to the present time, proved to be of greater commercial value than the half-million square miles contained in the territory on the mainland; for these islands—or rather two of them, there being four in all—are the principal resort of the seal in the northern hemisphere. Indeed the number of fur-seals which annually

visit the island of St Paul, in lat. 57° 8' north, long. 170° 12' west, is computed at between five and six millions.

Another of the islands, St George, about twenty-six miles to the south-east of St Paul, is the resort only of some quarter of a million seals; while the remaining two islands, Otter, five miles south of St Paul, and Walrus, six miles to the east of the same, are frequented principally by the walrus, and at certain seasons of the year by huge flocks of sea-fowl.

The trade in furs has always been one in which the first cost of the article has borne a singularly small proportion to the price it ultimately commands in the market. The late John Jacob Astor, reputed, at the time of his death, to be the richest man in the United States, laid the foundation of his enormous fortune (estimated at ten millions sterling) by his success in the fur-trade. He was wont, indeed, in his latter years to declare, that when, as a young man, he went into the wilds of the state of New York with his pack on his back, he had often purchased of the Indians for strings of beads, each of which had not cost him quite sixpence sterling, skins which, when cleaned and dressed, had commanded in the London market as many guineas. Of course the skins passed through the hands of various individuals, each of whom made a profit on them, before they were sold at the last-named price. Still, making every allowance for this fact, the gains of Astor were enormous in proportion to his first outlay. Even at the present time, although the profits realised in the fur-trade seventy years ago are no longer to be obtained, the difference between the first cost of a skin, or *pelt*, as it is technically termed, and the retail price is very considerable. For instance, the natives of St Paul are paid a uniform sum of forty cents (about one-and-eightpence sterling) for each seal-skin they procure, while the value of the same skin in London, before it is cleaned or dressed even, ranges from twenty-five shillings to two pounds; and when dressed it is worth from three to eight pounds, according to the quality.

We may mention, incidentally, that the North American fur-trade generally is at the present time in a state of transition. The monopoly so long enjoyed, and so jealously guarded, by the Hudson's Bay Company, of the products of the vast territory that owned their sway, having terminated, the Americans have pushed their way over the frontier, and established factories in various parts of the settlement, some of their stores being situated on the banks of Red River, almost under the shadow of the walls of Fort Garry itself. By this means, thousands of skins are annually collected from the native trappers and hunters, and forwarded *via* St Paul's, Minnesota, to New York, for shipment to Europe. Formerly, the delay and expense had to be incurred of sending the furs the whole distance from York Factory to England by sea; and the inhabitants of the Hudson's Bay Territory had to await

the return voyage of the ship for such supplies as they required from Europe. Now, the round trip can be, and is frequently made by the route above indicated, in less than forty days. The result of the greater facilities thus afforded for reaching the European market has been a considerable extension of the trade; several thousand more skins being forwarded to England annually, than were shipped by the Hudson's Bay Company when the business was exclusively in their hands.

After Alaska and the adjacent islands had become the property of the United States, several mercantile firms, with the enterprise characteristic of the American people, at once sent vessels, properly fitted out for sealing, to the Pribylov Islands; and so great was the number of individuals to whom the idea of doing this had simultaneously presented itself, that, had not Congress promptly intervened, the traders, in their eagerness for an immediate profit, would simply have exterminated the seals in a very few years.

A recent American writer indeed says: 'With the exception of our seal islands, there are none others of much importance in the world; the vast breeding-grounds in the antarctic having been, by the united efforts of all nationalities, misguided, short-sighted, and greedy of gain, entirely depopulated. Only a few thousand unhappy stragglers are now to be seen on the Falkland Islands and contiguous islets, where millions once were found; and small rookeries are protected and fostered by the government of Buenos Ayres north and south of the mouth of the Rio de la Plata; but the seal-life on the Pribylov Islands—thanks to the foresight of the Russians—has been preserved to the present day in all its original integrity.'

Congress wisely adopted the plan of leasing the islands to a Company, upon the condition, that not more than one hundred thousand seals should be killed annually, and of these none should be under one year of age. A lease embodying these stipulations was granted to the Alaska Commercial Company of San Francisco. It was for twenty years, from 1st July 1870; and the Company agreed to pay a royalty of two dollars fifty cents (ten shillings sterling) per pelt, in addition to a fixed rental for the islands of fifty thousand dollars (ten thousand pounds) per annum. Thus the United States government derives an income of very nearly sixty thousand pounds from this property; whereas Alaska itself, we believe, so far from contributing one penny to the federal treasury, has up to the present time absolutely been a charge upon it, though it is probable that this will soon cease to be the case.

The operations of the Company are confined for the present exclusively to the island of St Paul; and the period chosen for capturing the seals is from the date of their first arrival in June up to about the end of August.

The killing and skinning of the seals is done for the Company entirely by the natives of the island; and so rapidly is the work executed, that last year the whole hundred thousand were secured in rather less than thirty-five working days.

One portion of the island is used by the seals as a breeding-ground. Adjoining this spot are long stretches of sandy beach, upon which are found the 'holluschickie' or bachelor seals in tens of thousands, packed, usually, quite close together. The men to whom the task of capturing the day's

quota is intrusted, come down to the shore from the village, which is a short distance inland; and after a careful examination of the densely crowded masses of seals, select two or three thousand of the most suitable animals, usually males, between the ages of two and four years. Half-a-dozen men suffice to separate the seals selected from their companions; and they are then driven, precisely as sheep would be, to the village. Their powers of land-travelling are much superior to those of the common seal (*Phoca vitulina*) of our coasts; they move forward at the rate of about half a mile an hour with the most perfect docility, requiring only occasionally a little gentle urging. Stretched out in long files as they travel, a drove of three thousand will frequently be upwards of a mile in length.

Arrived at what are termed the 'killing-grounds,' which are two or three sandy fields in the outskirts of the village, the seals are allowed to cool; for the journey heats them, and if killed while in that condition, their fur either falls off, or can be pulled out easily. When the poor animals have recovered from the fatigue of their journey, twenty or thirty men, armed with heavy clubs, despatch them, by well-directed blows on the head, in batches of three or four hundred at a time. The seals are skinned as soon as possible after they are killed, for if the weather be at all warm, the bodies will become so swollen and decomposed in a few hours as to injure the quality of the fur.

The natives are very expert at their work, and some of them will take the hide off the body in less than two minutes; but the usual time required for the task averages from four to five minutes. The skins are then taken to the salt-houses of the Company, where they are spread out on benches in layers, one over the other, with salt thickly sprinkled over the inner surface of the skins; and after lying in pickle ten days or a fortnight, fresh salt is thrown over them before being done up in bundles for shipment.

The fur in its natural state has a very different appearance from that presented by the prepared skin; for, while in course of being dressed, the overhair is pulled out, and the fine close, soft, elastic fur is changed, by dyeing, from its original yellow or ochre hue, to a rich dark brown. Great care is required in doing this, and indeed it is said that only half-a-dozen furriers in Europe understand the art of properly dressing seal-skins.

We have drawn attention to the American system of carrying on the seal-trade in Pribylov Islands, in order to shew how much less destructive it is than that pursued by European sealers. The reason for this is obvious. It is conducted by a company, who act under statutory obligation, and who, for their own interests, take care to preserve the breed for future seasons. They are not so infatuated as to 'kill the goose that lays the golden eggs,' but keep the goose laying. Such are the advantages of fixing on a rational plan of operations, which is in all respects more profitable, as well as more humane, than if the matter were left to chance, or regulated only by private greed. We do not hear of those piteous wailings of young motherless seals in the Pribylov Islands, such as, with heart-rending inveteracy, are reported in connection with the North Sea fisheries. The cruelties there practised, chiefly for the sake of oil, are

simply a disgrace, of which all concerned, we think, cannot fail to be considerably ashamed.

[Since writing the above, an act of parliament has been passed, authorising the British government to adopt measures in conjunction with Norway and other countries to regulate the capture of seals, and restrain the destructive cruelties complained of.—Ed.]

STEPHEN BELL, THE USHER.

IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER III.

ALTHOUGH Mr Stephen Bell had walked so long and so late in the garden at his lodgings as to excite the alarm of his landlady, causing that sympathetic old person to lie awake for hours, and to peep cautiously from her window, and to say to her husband that Mr Bell would drive himself into a fever with so much study—although he walked so late, he was up at his usual time in the morning. In answer to his landlady's kind inquiries, he assured her he felt very well; but the good lady was not to be so deceived, and told her husband that Mr Bell looked worried and anxious, as if he hadn't been to sleep all night.

At his appointed time, too, the usher was at Hanover House, and on his way to the schoolroom he met the cook, who said: 'You'll excuse me, I know, Mr Bell, but if I was you I shouldn't let Master Alfred do his sums and that, this morning.'

'I will not, cook, if you think he should not study,' returned Bell. 'But is he ill?'

'O no! not exactly ill,' exclaimed the cook; 'but he has got a bit of a headache, and it would do him more good to go for a walk, I know. But, lor bless you, Mr Bell, he is that anxious to please you—for he has took to you wonderful—that if he was a-dying, he wouldn't ast you to let him off his lessons.'

The master smiled, and assured the cook that he would see the little fellow amused himself out-of-doors for that day. He went on to the schoolroom, while the cook, returning to the kitchen, told the housemaid what had passed, and added, that there was a feeling heart in Mr Bell, as nobody would think, to look at him.

The object of this eulogium found, on entering the schoolroom, his little pupil awaiting him, with book and slate in readiness. 'Suppose, Alfred,' said the usher, 'that instead of doing long division this morning, we go for a walk. What do you say to that?'

'Oh, that would be beautiful!' exclaimed the boy, brightening and colouring at once.

'Then, where shall we go?' continued the usher. 'Shall we go across the fields to Marley Copse, or walk over to Friar's Mills? Which shall it be?'

'I should like, if you would not mind,' said the child, 'to go to that beautiful park again, where we went the other day; if you don't mind, you know.'

The usher having no objection, in a very few minutes Alfred had put the books out of sight, and the pair had started for Oakmount Park.

All the way there the boy talked of *Masterman Ready*, and the adventures of the family on the island. His tutor led him on to talk, and seemed to take a great pleasure in listening to his wishes, crude and childish though they were, to see foreign lands. At the lodge gates they met a very big, stern-looking old man, a man whose hair and whiskers were white, but whose eyes were fierce and dark, and who was altogether of the harsh aspect that Alfred had always decided Paul Jones and Captain Kidd must have possessed. Mr Bell, however, shook hands with the big man, who asked who the 'young gen'l'man' was. On being informed, he patted Alfred's head, and told him to be a good boy, and mind his book, for learning was a wonderful thing. 'And that reminds me,' he continued, 'that I saw the surveyor yesterday with his lordship, and his lordship says: "*Mr Rule*," he says, "*here's your friend Lamsett*.—Well, Lamsett," his lordship says, "*have you beaten any more surveyors or architects lately?*" His lordship will never forget that joke. I knowed I was right, Mr Bell, all along; but if you hadn't a come up and worked out them calculations, and drawed that plan in the manner you did, I should have been beat. Come in and have a glass of ale and a crust.—Nonsense, man; my ale never hurts nobody. And I'll lay something, Prisc can find a gooseberry tart, or something of the kind, for little master here.—Lor,' he muttered, 'what a little creature it is!'

While speaking, he had led the way, followed by the others, into the lodge, where Miss Priscilla was preparing for dinner. The keeper's daughter appeared to more advantage in her neat cotton dress, with her smooth, dark hair pushed back, and in her plain white linen collar, than in her garment of state, even her black silk. Her father's commands were obeyed with great alacrity, and a lunch, somewhat more substantial than the invitation had foreshadowed, was soon spread. As before, Miss Priscilla was very attentive and kind to the child, who, on his part, appeared to grow very fond of her. On hearing the usher say that he had promised Alfred a stroll through the grounds, Priscilla said that Mr Bell would doubtless meet his friend there. 'My friend!' echoed the usher; 'if I found a friend anywhere, it would surprise me greatly; but I do not know whom you mean.'

'O Mr Bell,' exclaimed Priscilla, 'do not say so; you must have many friends, I am sure. But I spoke of the gentleman from the *Oakmount Arms*.'

'From the—from the *Oakmount Arms*!' cried Bell. 'Why, how does he come here, and why do you call him my friend?'

'I call him your friend, because he calls himself so,' said Miss Priscilla. 'He applied at the lodge, about half an hour before you came, for permission to walk in the park, and used your name as his introduction.'

'The deuce he did,' said Bell. 'Well, if so, it was like him.'

'Oh, that was the young fellow I saw as I came

down the slope, was it?' said the keeper. 'I was going to ask about him, only seeing Mr Bell put it out of my head.'

'He is not so very young, father,' returned Priscilla, 'although I fancy he tries to look so: looks like what—from all I have read of them, for I have never seen one—an actor looks when off the stage.'

'You are right, Miss Lamsett,' said the usher; 'that is just what he does look like.—Well, Master Alfred, would you be willing to stay a little while with this lady?—You would not mind taking charge of him, I am sure.'

Of course Priscilla could make but one answer to this, and so it was arranged that Alfred should stay at the lodge, while Bell went for a stroll in the woods by himself, with the desire, as he owned, of meeting the gentleman from the *Oakmount Arms*. So he went on, and looking back from the top of the slope, waved his hand to Alfred and Priscilla, who were already very busy picking peas in the garden. 'He may as well be there as anywhere else,' muttered the usher; 'the poor little creature seems to have no friends who care a groat whether he lives or dies, so if I— Oh, there he is then.' At this moment he caught sight of the object of his search, stretched at the foot of a tree, in the shade. Whether he had seen Bell or not, the usher could not be sure, but he gave him credit for having done so, and for dexterity in assuming surprise, when hailed by name.

'Why, this is an unexpected treat!' he exclaimed, as Bell drew nigh. 'I took the liberty of using your name at the gate, and found it a perfect passport. Rather queer people there, I fancy, the male party especially; looks a regular old rough.'

The other frowned, as though this criticism was not exactly to his taste, and without another word, Mr Prior changed the subject.

'I suppose you still mean business,' he said, 'for you don't seem one of the men who take up a thing overnight, as if they were red-hot, and who drop it in the morning, as if it had grown red-hot instead.'

'My mind has not changed,' said Bell.

'No, of course not; I knew that,' continued Prior, yet he seemed a little relieved on hearing Bell say so. 'Then we can talk here as well as at my place. Now, I suppose you want to know the next step to be taken?'

'I do,' returned his companion. 'I am, of course, pretty certain that you are here under a feigned name, but for that I care little. If I knew your right name, I probably should be no wiser, and no more inclined to take your word than I am now. I mean, you see, because I should know really no more of you. But these lawyers I can trust. They may be ever such scoundrels, and I daresay they are, but Maine, Firth, and Maine have a reputation to keep up, and to keep it they must preserve faith with all who do business with them. Now, when can I see them?'

'To-morrow,' responded the other promptly.

'Shall you go with me?' asked Bell.

'No,' said Prior. 'I will write to the head of the firm, to insure his being in the way, and he will be there, never doubt that, when he hears you are coming; but I shall not go, for the fewer the merrier, in cases like these.'

'Very well, I see nothing to prevent me from

running up to-morrow,' said Bell thoughtfully. 'I need not call upon you this evening as arranged, for we can settle at once as to the time of my seeing Mr Maine. Then I will leave you, for little Rainwood is at the lodge, waiting my return.'

'What!' exclaimed Prior, raising himself on his elbow—'what! the child himself! Why did you not bring him here?'

'Well, I don't know,' returned Bell. 'I thought I should find you; and as we might have a little confidential talk to go through, that perhaps he had better not come.'

Prior rose quickly to his feet, laid his hand on his companion's arm, and speaking with a look on his face differing very much from his usual lazy careless air, said: 'I ask you why you did not bring him here? No shilly-shally with me—it won't do.'

'What do you mean?' exclaimed Bell, shaking him off, and returning his angry look with a scowl, for which his harsh features were specially adapted, and which caused Prior, even in his excitement, to recoil a pace.

'I mean this, you know,' continued the latter, with an attempt to maintain his air of threatening; 'that it is of no use your being mealy-mouthed with me. You must not pretend to wonder what I mean, and all that; and you must remember that we are all swimming in deep waters—yourself as much as any of us.' Although his words were 'brave words,' yet the tone in which he spoke had an unsound ring, and as he finished, he drew farther from the usher.

The latter spoke after a very brief pause. 'Don't prate to me,' he said, 'of your swimming in deep waters, and such mad talk. What I promise to do, I shall do as I like, and not as you like. Be careful you talk no more to me in that way about the boy, or suppose that because I am in the scheme, I shall let you dictate to me. And understand me once for all'—here he swore a terrific oath, the first Prior, or any one in the town of Onslope, had ever heard from his lips, and its sound, with the fierce expression of his face, caused Prior to turn as pale as ashes—'understand me, I say, that whatever I agree to do with the boy, I agree to do myself, and that I mean to hold him safe from every one else; so, if you are wise, you will neither threaten him, nor meddle with him, for if you do, and but a hair of his head suffers, I will kill you. I don't mean any figure of speech, my man; I swear I will kill you. So now we are clear on that point.'

'Clear!' gasped Prior, passing his hand across his forehead, as though he felt the sweat upon it—'clear! What an unnecessary burst you have indulged in. I— I only wanted to see the youngster. But I can make allowance for a man who thinks he has been unduly interfered with, and I don't bear any ill-will. Come! we are as good friends as we were before, I hope?'

'We are,' said Bell emphatically. 'I give you my word, and you may safely pledge yours, that we are quite as good friends as we have been at any time since we have known each other. Now, tell me at what time I am to see your London lawyer.'

Upon this a brief conversation ensued, and at its conclusion, with very little leave-taking, the usher turned abruptly from his associate, and strode down the hill towards the lodge. Prior

watched his progress, and muttered some half-intelligible sentences, which were not very complimentary to his friend. 'A selfish brute,' he said. 'I believe he would kill me, as he says, even if he came back from the antipodes to do it. Yet that makes him all the better man for our purpose. I like one of your stubborn characters, for if he would murder me, as I am sure he would, he is just the man—for all his pretence of defending his charge—when it suited his purpose, to'— Here he checked himself, and seemed afraid, even in his solitude, to finish his reflection aloud.

The same style of greeting and the same offer of hospitality as on the previous occasion, were shewn at the lodge, and Alfred seemed fonder than ever of his new friend, who, on her part, asked the usher to allow him to spend the whole of the day, at least once during his holidays, at the park. Bell hesitated, and made the stereotyped objection that he feared it would be troubling them too much; but Priscilla pressed the invitation, and the usher, with some abruptness, gave consent. He left the lodge with Alfred, and, at parting, pressed Priscilla's hand more warmly than he had ever pressed it before. But the thoughts that appeared to be in his mind as he did so, need hardly have crimsoned her face, or caused her to sit in a reverie for ten minutes after he had gone.

'Do you remember your father or mother, Alfred?' said Bell, breaking a silence which had lasted for the greater part of the way home.

'No, sir,' said the boy, looking wonderingly at his questioner; 'I don't remember anybody but my friends at the schools. Sometimes I think I can remember my mother coming to look at me when I was in bed; but I am not sure; it might have been a governess. I used to go to a girls' school, you know, before I came to Hanover House, and I never had any vacations.'

'What!' exclaimed Bell, looking down at his tiny companion; 'did you never have any holidays at all?'

'Once I did, and that was such a nice one,' returned the boy, his eyes sparkling at the recollection of the treat. 'I went home with Master Brownlow; his mamma told him to ask me for a week. We did have such fun there, to be sure.'

'Ah, I daresay you did,' said Bell, who seemed willing to let him talk. 'It was very kind of his mamma.'

'O yes,' assented Alfred; 'and she is such a nice lady. She keeps a public-house, you know.'

'Indeed,' said Bell, as the child paused after this announcement.

'Yes, a public-house,' repeated the boy; 'and we used to have such games in the stables. They had a lot of pigs too, and once I fell into the trough, and made myself in such a mess. But Mrs Brownlow was not in the least angry.'

The usher made no response, and, lacking his encouragement, the conversation flagged; but the tenor of his thoughts was evident from his glancing more than once at his companion, and ejaculating just above his breath, 'Poor boy, poor little boy.'

When the afternoon lessons had been duly gone through, Mr Bell left, first informing the house-keeper that he would not be at Hanover House next day.

For on the morrow he had important business

to transact, the first part of which consisted in calling on his friend at the *Oakmount Arms*; and having been furnished by him with a letter of introduction to the lawyer, he took train for London. The address given was in a respectable street—an aristocratic street it had always been considered—near a West End square; for the greater portion of the firm's business lay among a circle which preferred to transact it at what they considered the private abode of the principal, rather than in the more orthodox region where the regular office was situated. Whether these private clients gained anything by their privilege, they were better able to tell at the conclusion of their business, than at its commencement.

On knocking at the door, Bell was admitted, not by a clerk, as he had supposed he would be, but by a fashionable and imposing footman; the hall, too, upon which the door opened, was so spacious and gorgeous a place, that Bell, not usually impressionable, was rather staggered, and doubted if he had not made a mistake. 'I was to call here, I think,' he said, 'to see Mr Maine, of the firm of Maine, Firth, and Maine; but'—

'What name, sir?' asked the man; and on being answered, continued: 'Quite right, sir. If you will be good enough to step into this room, Mr Maine will be with you directly. He is expecting you, I know.'

So Bell was shewn into the great lawyer's study, and a very comfortable room he found it; but some time elapsed before Mr Maine appeared. At last he came, accompanied, as Bell rightly guessed, by his head-clerk. Mr Maine was a very old gentleman, and his clerk was nearly as old. The lawyer was stout, bald-headed, very short-sighted, and asthmatic: the clerk was a tall, thin, very quiet man, who seldom looked up, or around him; indeed, Bell doubted if he had even noticed that there was a third person present, when he first entered the room.

The conversation need not be detailed; it was of the most commonplace description; it was no matter what Mr Maine thought, he evidently did not intend to let anything escape him, and it was equally clear that he did not intend to allow his visitor to travel out of the record. One or two attempts which Bell ventured upon, to see how far Maine and Prior were working together, were completely snubbed, and the usher tried no further. After about ten minutes' conversation, Mr Maine gave his attendant certain instructions as regarded the drawing up of a deed which Bell was to sign on a future day. 'Whether do you think,' continued the lawyer, 'a week or a fortnight will be the most convenient time for your journey?' This very slight hint, if indeed it were meant as one, was all he suffered to escape him, as shewing that he knew of, or guessed at, possible difficulties in the way. Bell said that a fortnight would probably suit him best; and then, while his clerk was jotting down the heads of his work, the old gentleman asked Bell many questions about the country around Onslope, which he seemed to know thoroughly; and the usher interested him very much by telling of his success in the fish-ponds at Oakmount Park, for the lawyer had been in his day an expert angler. At last, the instructions were completed, and Bell, having now nothing to wait for, rose and took his leave—the clerk not having spoken once during the whole time.

CHAPTER IV.

The holidays were now really holiday-time to Alfred Rainwood, for he had no lessons to learn, and nearly every day he was with his new friends at the lodge, to the great delight of the cook, who, in the absence of Mrs Garney, reigned supreme. She thought it was a great deal better for the boy than poring over his books, and was greatly pleased to find that Mr Bell agreed with her. The usher had grown still more silent and reserved than before, and even little Alfred understood that he must talk less to him now, although, when Bell spoke, his tone was kinder than ever. Mr Prior, too, found a difference, for Bell, so far from seeking his society as a man with an interest in common might be supposed to do, decidedly avoided him. They saw each other, nevertheless, every day, and Prior always had the hearty, boisterous welcome for his friend; but it was quite understood on both sides that this was only a hollow show, a mere pretence of keeping up a friendly connection. It may seem strange that Prior should tarry at Onslope, under the circumstances, but it might be that he was determined not to lose sight of his coadjutor until things were more in train; or perhaps he felt that he acted in some degree as a spur to his resolve. Be that as it may, he remained at Onslope, and it was wholly owing to his contrivance that he and Bell met nearly every day.

A week of the fortnight had elapsed, and during that time the usher had once again visited London; the day after this visit, too, was the only instance in which he had sought Prior. He went to the *Oakmount Arms*, where he was pretty sure to find him, and without any preface, put several cards into his hand, saying briefly: 'I was there yesterday.'

Prior glanced at them; they were all from shipping agents and outfitters, and he nodded his approval. 'That is what I do so like about you, Bell,' he said; 'you are such a fellow for business. I had not spoken to you three minutes, on the first day we met, before I had entirely made up my mind about you. I hear you told Mr Maine that you could go in a fortnight. How time flies! Why, it is half-gone already.'

'If you had noticed the dates,' returned the other, 'you would have seen that no ship sails for San Francisco—it is there I mean to settle—quite so early. You need not look spiteful over it, as the delay is very trifling—and we cannot help it.'

'My dear fellow,' exclaimed Prior, 'take your time; pray do not imagine for a moment I wish to hurry you. Nothing is further from my thoughts, and—talking of hurrying reminds me that you must have time for a social glass this morning. It is so seldom that you will join me.'

Bell smiled the quiet smile which Prior liked so little, and complied, his companion all the while telling him what articles would be of most use where he was going, and urging him to take a couple of good revolvers, the proper management of which he would shew him. He dilated, too, a great deal on the character of the society Bell would meet at San Francisco, and the best mode of dealing with it; but it turned out that, in reality, he had never been to California, and only spoke from a kind of general newspaper knowledge of the place.

Much sooner than Prior wished, Bell rose from the social board, and left, directing his steps to Oakmount Park, and as he walked thither, fell into a reverie deeper than were his customary thoughts; so absorbed was he, that on turning an angle in the road not far from the park gates, he stumbled against a man, whom he recognised as the 'boots' at Hanover House. The man touched his hat when he saw who it was, and Bell, with a sort of half-apology, went on, vexed at his own stupidity. He found Alfred busy in old Lamsett's garden, and it was wonderful what an improvement the last few days had wrought upon the child. He had lost much of the paleness which had seemed natural to him, and had gathered something of the nice ruddy glow which an English boy should always wear.

'I am going to run away with your little friend for a short time, Miss Lamsett,' said the usher. 'I shall take him for a walk in the wood; and to-morrow, I think, I shall take him to London.—How would you like to go to London for a day, Alfred?'

It need hardly be said that the boy's eyes glistered at the idea, or that he at once asked whether they should see the Queen and her palace, and St Paul's, and Westminster Abbey, and the British Museum, and twenty other famous places about which he had read; and then gladly left the garden to go with the usher. They struck off from what may be called the main road of the park, and pushed their way through ferns and underwood where the trees made a gloom in every direction, and suggested to Alfred Indian jungles and North American forests, where tigers might roam, or warriors with their tomahawks and scalping-knives might lurk. Starting off on these themes, the usher listened to the boy's animated prattle with a pleased yet melancholy attention.

At last they came out on an open place, in the centre of which lay a small lake, and here Bell told the boy they would rest. As it was just the place for an ambush if an enemy were near, or for the hunter to await the lion coming to drink, it suited the imagination of the child.

'Do you like these walks with me?' asked Bell, very suddenly.

'O yes, sir, very much,' returned Alfred. 'I never was so happy before.'

'I suppose not,' said the other, musingly, and looking thoughtfully at the child. 'Then if some fairy—but you never speak of fairy tales, I notice—should appear, and order that we were to go, by magic, of course, to some foreign land, all wild like this, only of immense extent, you would not be frightened?'

'Frightened!' laughed the boy; 'I wish the fairy would come now.'

'Perhaps she may,' returned Bell, smiling in turn, but his smile was very different from the boy's. 'Fairies are often nearer than we think, I daresay.'

'I wish she would appear, then,' continued Alfred. 'I do so like to hear of foreign countries, and pirates, and—' O Mr Bell, do you remember that you once promised to tell me some stories about a friend of yours? I like to hear true stories, you know, like *Masterman Ready*—at least,' faltered the boy, seeing his mistake, 'stories which sound true, like that does, you know.'

'Well, Alfred,' said the master, after a pause, 'I

will tell you something about my friend, whom you may see some day.

'See him!' exclaimed Alfred; 'then he is still alive!'

'O yes, he is alive,' replied the usher; 'and I will tell you what happened to him many years ago. He was a—Frenchman.'

'I am sorry for that,' struck in Alfred, 'because, you know, Frenchmen are not so brave and enterprising as Englishmen.'

'This was a very unusual kind of Frenchman, Alfred,' returned the usher gravely; 'in fact, you would have taken him for an Englishman. But you may some day alter your notions about Frenchmen, Alfred. Well, this Frenchman—my friend, you know—could not thrive very well at home, and so he decided on leaving England, and going to Ceylon, where he had obtained an appointment.'

'Oh, he lived in England, then?' said the boy.

The usher stroked his upper lip, as a man does who wears a moustache—a trick he often had, although he wore none—before he replied: 'Yes, he lived in England. I forgot to tell you that. He sailed for the East Indies in a very much smaller vessel than usually made the voyage, but it was cheap, and he was poor. His wife went with him, but they left their only child, a pretty and interesting girl of thirteen years old, in England.'

'Was his wife a Frenchwoman?' asked the child, who evidently could not get over this unfortunate nationality.

'No,' said Bell—'no; she was a good, affectionate, devoted English wife—beautiful in her husband's eyes, at anyrate. They had married when but boy and girl, and her only fault was in loving him too much. It was a dreadful pang to part with their little girl, but she was delicate, and they dreaded the climate on her account, and so they left her behind. The little vessel had a very fair passage until long after they had rounded the Cape, but then there arose one of the fiercest and most prolonged storms that the oldest sailors on board had ever known, and she was driven an immense distance out of her course. When at last the crew regained the mastery over the ship, she was not far from the southern coast of Arabia—you know where that is upon the map. It was thought desirable to run her close to the land, to find some sheltering inlet where the damages received in the storm could be repaired. They had not, however, been on the coast many hours before a ship hove in sight, which proved to be a pirate.'

'A pirate!' echoed Alfred, whose eyes grew larger as the story increased in interest.

'Yes,' returned Bell, 'a pirate. Not such a pirate as you read of in story-books, but they were a cunning and bloodthirsty crew, nevertheless. Had the ship not been disabled, or had she been as large as the East Indiamen usually were, this vessel would have passed on, and carried such cargo as it had to some market, and waited for another opportunity; but as it was, the temptation was too great for the pirates, and they came up before the light wind very fast indeed. The English crew made signals, and fired their only cannon, to attract the stranger's attention; but it was soon evident what kind of a craft she was, and how much better it would have been had she not seen them at all. She was crowded with a half-naked set of Arabs, and in

every hand a sword, or knife, or long gun could be seen. The English captain tried to get away, but in vain; and some of the crew determined to defend the ship, although they were hardly more than one to ten; so they armed themselves as well as they could, and signalled to the Arabs to keep off, but, of course, to no purpose. On came the vessel as fast as ever, and two or three of the English fired at her, in the desperate hope of checking her course; but no one—very fortunately for the lives of the Europeans—was hurt by the weak volley. It was enough, however, to draw a heavy fire from the Arab ship, which was now within a hundred yards of them. The crew saw their pieces levelled, and all instinctively crouched behind the bulwarks—the bulwarks are the sides of the ship, Alfred.'

'Yes, yes; I know,' said the boy impatiently—'I know all about ships. Please, go on.'

Bell continued: 'They crouched down, and so escaped harm. My friend was among them; but scarcely had the sound of the firearms been heard, ere a piercing shriek arose from behind him. He knew at once what had happened, and springing up, was just in time to catch his wife as she staggered forward. Roused by the noise of the firing, she had run upon deck to see what was the matter, and a bullet— Here the speaker paused, and smoked his meerschaum steadily for a few seconds, looking fixedly the while into the wood beyond the little lake. The lad was about to urge him to continue, but there was something in his companion's face which prevented him. 'A bullet struck her,' continued Bell, as though he had not left off at all—and he did not seem aware that he had done so—in the breast; and when he caught her, she was a dead woman. You will not understand if I tell you that my unfortunate friend has thanked Heaven a thousand times that it was so. In an instant, with fearful yells and cries, a hundred dark figures flung themselves upon the ship's deck, as the pirate craft struck with tremendous force against her sides. No resistance was offered, it was so evidently hopeless; but two or three of the foremost seeing an English lady fainting, as they thought, dashed forward to secure a still greater prize than they had expected. My friend, desperate with his loss, struck—though only with his clenched fist—the first brute who touched his wife, and was himself instantly cut down by the sword of a pirate. He would have been killed on the spot, but that they saw the lady was dead, and murderers and robbers as they were, they guessed the truth, and spared her husband. He lay for a time insensible, for they had no doctors there, and the gash was a severe one, extending from the crown of his head down below his temple; but he did not die. The men among whom he had fallen were not wholly pirates, and they had a sort of rude faith and honour with them, which, especially after he again lived among civilised beings, my friend has more than once admiringly dwelt upon. They did not massacre the crew; they let them go, and ransacked the ship; but my friend they detained for two reasons—first, because he was wounded in defence of his dead wife, and then because, as he was not dressed like a sailor, they thought he was a priest, and so rendered more respect to him.

'When once they had decided upon keeping him at all, they took jealous care that he should not get away, lest he should carry information to

European nations of their haunts. So he lived with them until he became at last a desperate man, and at length threw in his lot with them. He professed their religion, wore their costume, and went on their expeditions; though he never joined them against his own countrymen. This they might not have allowed; they might have insisted on his fighting when they pleased and with whom they pleased, but that the man who had cut him down, and who was a powerful sheik, or chief, protected him. The chief was influenced to do this by another person; and could the stranger really have made up his mind to take the Mohammedan religion, as he feigned to do, and dwell as an Arab on the Arab coast, he might have been at this day a powerful chief also.

'But he never married again,' said Bell, speaking in a higher key, after another brief pause, and, as the boy thought, striking very unexpectedly into a reflection which had nothing to do with his story; 'and after many weary years, during which he had fought more than twenty times in desperate and bloody, but nameless skirmishes, and had seen such fearful deeds and awful retaliation as would make—we will say our friend Mr Prior,' he continued, with his quiet smile, 'tremble but to hear of them; when he had grown to regard his life carelessly, charmed though it seemed to be, as a thing he might lose any day or any hour, the old sheik spoken of gave him his liberty. That the old man should do so, was the dying request of the most gentle and amiable member of his family; and so, very quietly, for some would have prevented him, the Frankish stranger was placed on board a vessel from the United States. He had acquired some wealth, partly from his share in successful forays, and partly from trading; not a very great deal, but enough to set him above actual want for his life, although he concealed the fact from all whom he came afterwards to know. It was well that it was so, for when, after a very short stay in California, whither his ship was bound, he landed in England, he found that a penniless man had better be in Arabia.'

'What did he come to England for? Why didn't he go to France?' said Alfred.

'To France!' returned the usher. 'What did he want in France? O yes—I forgot; you mean because he was a Frenchman. True; but then, you see, his little girl was in England. He did not, however, know where to look for her. The proprietors of the school at which he had placed her, of course would not keep her when the term for which they had received payment had expired. These proprietors were dead; but with much trouble he found an old servant who remembered his Kate—her name was Katharine, so was her mother's. This old servant recollected that she had been apprenticed to a milliner, but the milliner was gone away, and nearly all trace was lost. At last he heard that his daughter was dead, had died very unhappily too; and then he stood alone in the world, without a soul with whom he could claim kindred. Now, Alfred, you see that all stories of fighting with pirates do not end so brilliantly in real life as they do in story-books, for my friend would be glad, after all his adventure and strife, glad and proud, Alfred, if he knew he had won the love and esteem of even a poor little orphan schoolboy like you.'

He ceased, and rising from the grass, led Alfred back towards the lodge, neither speaking for some time; but Bell, although an observant man in many respects, fell into the very common error of underrating the penetration of a child. A childish mind is sometimes as capable of drawing inferences, especially where it is interested, as that of a man thrice its own age; and Bell never dreamed that Alfred had often wondered why there was a large bare seam on the usher's head, over which he carefully brushed his hair; or that, while he was telling the story, his little companion's eyes were continually examining part of a terrible scar visible just below his hat. Alfred knew as well that Bell was relating his own history as the usher himself did; and a gentle pressure of the hand which held his own small fingers was a mute way of shewing how the boy loved and sympathised with his friend.

They reached the lodge, and there was old Mr Lamsett as bluff and hearty, and yet as fierce-looking as ever, and as energetic as ever in his invitation, which the usher eventually complied with. The keeper added another to the claims he already possessed in the child's eyes of being regarded as a sort of woodland outlaw, by shewing that the buttons of his waistcoat were all composed of real foxes' teeth; from these the transition, in Alfred's mind, was so easy to wolves and bears, that he quite resolved to place Mr Lamsett along with the heroes of the rifle and the bow, with whom his memory was well stocked. But Alfred wondered to hear the keeper invariably refer to the victory gained by the usher over Mr Rule the surveyor; indeed, it appeared to be considered by him as one of the most memorable events in his life. It was plain, even to the child, that Lamsett was a very ignorant, though shrewd man, and that he consequently held scholarship—as he kept terming it—in high respect; therefore, the fact, that Mr Bell had been able to beat the surveyor with his own weapons, proving *him* wrong, and the keeper right, evidently raised the usher very high in the keeper's opinion. Alfred's expedition to London was of course spoken of, and the keeper, after expressing his wonder that any one could live in such a 'mizmaze' of a place, gave the boy a bright half-crown to spend. This was the largest sum of money Alfred had ever possessed at once; pocket-money, indeed, he had none, for the dole of three-pence each Saturday, authorised by most parents whose sons went to Hanover House, was not allowed in his case. The school-bills were paid the week after they were sent in; and whatever clothes were required, were at once ordered, but nothing more than this; nothing in the way of pocket-money, or the smallest parcel, ever came to Alfred—save from a very unusual source. Mrs Garney contrived that the lad should sometimes have pence to spend, and, finding out his birthday, made him then a considerable cake; but other friendly attentions he had known none. So he immediately arranged, in consultation with Miss Priscilla, for the purchase of a number of articles much coveted by boys, and which would probably cost about seven or eight pounds, all of which was to come out of his half-crown. To these details the cook at Hanover House was also an attentive listener, as he sat with her for half an hour before going to bed, and very pleased was cook to find that the child was making friends.

On the next day, they went to London; and on the bewilderment, delight, and almost fear, with which Alfred rode through the great city, we need not here dwell. It will be sufficient to say that Mr Bell devoted himself to amuse the boy more earnestly than might have been expected from one of his saturnine disposition: every place they had visited, and every wonderful sight they saw, being duly detailed to cook by Alfred on his return, tired as he was, ere he went to bed; and to Miss Priscilla, on the following morning. Among other strange things which he narrated, was how he went into an immense shop, which was quite as large, he should think, as Onslow church, and where there were millions on millions of coats, and all that; and there Mr Bell had bought, oh! so many clothes; and for fun, they had made Alfred dress himself in such strange coats and cloaks. But this incident was merely an episode in the day's adventures, and of far less consequence than the steamers, and the omnibuses, and the crowds in the streets.

After Alfred had gone back to the school that evening, and twilight had fallen on the dusky avenues and glades of Oakmount Park, Mr Bell presented himself very unexpectedly, at the gates, and seeing Miss Lamsett in the distance, walking with the two huge dogs for company's sake, he went to her. It was well for him that the dogs knew him, or their clumsy gambols of welcome might have been changed for an attack against which no man could have defended himself. Miss Lamsett smiled pleasantly when she saw who it was, and explained that she frequently walked in the park in the cool of the evening. 'Although the place is lonely, it is safe,' she said; 'and even if it were less so, my escort would be sufficient.'

Bell said a few words in reply, and then added, very abruptly: 'Miss Lamsett, I am here to-night to ask you a favour.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed Priscilla, and her colour changed, although the gloom of the evening hid it. 'I can promise beforehand that I, or my father, will be only too proud to grant it.'

'If any one will do it, it will be you, I know,' continued Bell; 'and in asking the boon, I am compelled to reveal my plans to you; but I know how truthful and discreet you are. I believe, Miss Lamsett, that I shall soon leave here, probably never to return; and I want you always to think well of me, if you can, and at any rate, when I am gone, always to speak well of me, or not at all.'

'Mr Bell!' ejaculated the young woman in amazement.

'Such a request sounds ridiculous,' resumed the usher; 'nor would I, for any inducement, make it to any one else. I have lived in many wild places, and endured many strange trials, until I have become hardened, and there is none in the world with whom to part would make my heart ache, or from whom I would rather receive a blessing than a curse—save your father and—yourself.'

'Oh, do not speak so wildly, sir,' remonstrated Priscilla; 'you wrong yourself and your nature. Why, if you were to go—which, I hope, is not to be—you would grieve to part even from little Alfred, who has grown to love you as he might have loved the father he has never known.'

'His case is very different,' said Bell, with a stern gravity: 'of him I say nothing. But in your little home, Miss Lamsett, I have always

been received with openness, with kindness, with sincerity. Over-rating every trifling service I could render you, forgetting all your own lavish returns, I see in you both, the kindly hearts which are as sure to encounter ingratitude and deceit, as water is to run down hill. If I were a younger man, and had a career before me; if I were more worthy'—He checked himself here, and they passed as he spoke into an opening where the roads crossed, and the moon, which had now risen, shewed Priscilla's face turned sadly to his own, and that her eyes were brimming with tears.

With a perceptible effort, she said: 'What you ask, we must do, Mr Bell, because we know it to be no favour whatever, but that it will always be our duty to speak of you in the highest terms. If you are going away, I shall of course keep your secret, as you desire it, but I shall feel that I am about to lose the best friend I ever had in my life; and when you speak of a person more worthy of the esteem of any one, man or woman, you speak of what I, and father, consider an impossibility.'

They turned on the homeward journey as she finished speaking, and walked in silence for some little time, save that Priscilla was sobbing, as Bell could distinguish, in spite of her efforts to subdue the sound. The usher naturally felt embarrassed; he had known for a long time that Priscilla was partial to him, that she regarded him as a second Admirable Crichton, for, in her solitary and uneventful life, he was probably the most gentle and accomplished visitor she had ever seen within the walls of the lodge; and he had been very guarded in his conduct, lest he should encourage this feeling to go too far. But he also liked the girl better than any one he knew; she had been always friendly to him, and now that he was about to part from her, probably for ever, he felt almost as much regret as did Priscilla herself. He thought, as he glanced sidelong at her, how well her trim dress, her carefully smoothed hair, her open candid face, would become his home, should he ever establish one, on the other side of the American continent. He felt, too, that she would go with him anywhere, and wait any time; and that, as she was not too young a woman, it would be difficult to find a partner so suitable to him. Nevertheless, he did not wish to involve her in the risks of his future life, and so he began what he at the outset only intended to be a little fuller explanation, carefully avoiding all mention of Alfred Rainwood. But Priscilla listened with so much sympathy, and spoke with a voice in which it was so very plain that her brave desire of encouraging Bell was struggling with her irrepressible sorrow at parting with him, that the explanation took a different form. Ere they reached the lodge he was her accepted suitor, and she had promised, betide what might, to go out to any country he should choose. In answer to his mention of her father, to whom Bell wished the engagement immediately to be made known, with a caution to keep it secret, Priscilla said: 'Fear no objection on his part, Mr Bell; he likes you better almost than his own sons; and, but that he could never bear the thought of dying out of view of Oakmount, I am sure he would come to you also. I pledge my word for him; and only trust for myself that I may prove worthy of the honour and happiness you have given me.'

This was a rather 'set' kind of speech, but poor

Priscilla's little learning was all derived from books, and not from intercourse with the world; so, following the precedents which appeared to be common, she fully believed it was a very proper speech to make, and that a great honour had indeed been conferred upon her. She gave her lips frankly to be kissed when they parted at the park gates, and then hurrying into the lodge, she threw herself on her bed and wept for joy.

MRS FLETCHER.

THE autobiography of this lady, recently published, offers no startling incidents, nor, indeed, much out of the ordinary run of domestic life; but in her story, if we may call it so, there is the charm of truthfulness and simplicity, with revelations of high principle, and a remarkable vigour of character; on which account, alone, the work would be worthy of commendation, independently of the interest derived from notices of political and literary characters in the early years of the present century.

Eliza Dawson—such being the maiden name of the authoress—was the daughter of a respectable yeoman at Oxtou, near Tadcaster, in Yorkshire, who farmed his own small estate, and was a man remarkable for his taste and intelligence. At her birth, in 1770, Eliza had the great misfortune to lose her mother, and was thrown on the affections of her father and other relations. A few years later, she received the kind attentions of her mother's early friend, Mrs Brudenell, whose history in itself was sufficiently sorrowful. As Miss Hebburn, and an heiress, she had the bad fortune to become acquainted with, and to marry the Rev. Edward Brudenell, who, from being an aide-de-camp in the army, entered the service of the church for the sake of a good living. Profligate, and devoid of proper principle, he soon rendered his wife miserable, and she felt constrained to leave him; having for subsistence only a small allowance from what was substantially her own property. Sympathising with Mrs Brudenell in her unhappy fate, Mr Dawson let her have a cottage on his estate, and there, as a duty, she devoted herself to the elementary education of Eliza, cultivated her taste for poetry, and excited an interest in historical narratives. Improved under this friendly tuition, she was, at eleven years old, sent to rub off her rusticity, and acquire what are called accomplishments at a boarding-school at York. Eliza's reminiscences of this school-life are not agreeable. The management was a routine of despotism and dissimulation. Four volumes of the *Spectator* constituted the entire school library. From the strength of her good principles, Miss Dawson escaped the dangers incidental to this pretentious and wretched establishment.

Returning home, Eliza was, at sixteen years of age, indulged by her father with a trip to the Highlands of Scotland, in the course of which she visited a school friend, Mrs Mellis, in the neighbourhood of Perth. On how small a matter is a young lady's fate hinged! A year afterwards, Mrs Mellis introduced to her Mr Archibald Fletcher, a practising Edinburgh lawyer, on his way through Yorkshire to London. Fletcher, a Highlander by birth, was a cadet of an old Argyllshire family, Fletcher of Dunans. At this time,

he was forty-three years of age—rather too advanced in life, one would say, to entertain the notion of marrying a girl of seventeen; notions of this kind, however, are not always regulated by age. Mr Fletcher was mightily taken with Miss Dawson's acute intelligence and literary tastes; while she was flattered by his attentions, more particularly by his sending her a gift of a handsome copy of Ossian's poems, and a letter inviting her remarks on the work. Next year, Mr Fletcher again paid a visit to Tadcaster. 'I do remember,' says Eliza, 'that when I received his note from the inn, saying that he would do himself the honour to call and spend the evening with us, I did resort to the toilette to curl my hair with rather more care than usual. I was more struck than ever with the good sense and good taste of his conversation, and much interested in his animated account of the splendid speeches he had heard at Westminster Hall, at the trial of Warren Hastings. My own mind had perhaps made some advance in knowledge and reflection, and I enjoyed this visit more than I had done before.' Matters were now in a fair way for a mutual attachment.

In 1789, Eliza again visited Mrs Mellis, near Perth, and thither Mr Fletcher shortly afterwards proceeded; and then, she adds, 'the opportunity of conversing much together confirmed the attachment he had entertained for me from our first acquaintance in 1787, and converted the sentiments of respect and high esteem I had felt for him into those of a tenderer nature. I thought I had never met with a person of such real elevation of mind, and such independence and worth of character; and a happy union of thirty-seven years as his wife served to confirm me in that opinion. It was agreed that he should come to Harrogate in the autumn of that year, and thence to pay us a visit, when he had my permission to make his wishes known to my father.' Proposals were accordingly made, but rejected. The father 'had formed splendid expectations for the child, on whom he doted. He could not think of parting with me to such a distance. He could not think of my marrying a man altogether without fortune, and where there was so great a disparity of years.' Eliza considered the objections to be sound and rational, yet she did not give up Fletcher, corresponded with him, and hoped still to be his wife. Her admirer was not without sentiment. He nourished the fancy that in appearance, manners, and character, she bore a resemblance to Sophia in Fielding's *Tom Jones*, and he began to call her by that name in his correspondence. It was clear the marriage could not be indefinitely postponed. It took place on the 16th July 1791; the father offering no further obstacle, yet not giving his consent, nor honouring the ceremony with his presence.

Removing to Edinburgh, a new life opens on Eliza, now Mrs Fletcher. She is introduced to men of talent and literature, and to many women of rank and fashion. Soon, however, she discovered that her husband was somewhat looked down upon on account of his political principles, and that she came in for a share of the obloquy. Archibald Fletcher, to whose nobleness of character Brougham and Cockburn have referred, had been an ardent admirer of the first principles of the French Revolution. Like many others, he imagined that there was about to dawn an era of civil liberty and social perfectibility. The horrors

of the Reign of Terror disenchanted general expectations of this nature, but there were lingering hopes that matters would speedily rectify. Mrs Fletcher, with political leanings similar to those of her husband, speaks of the prodigious advantage likely to ensue from the breaking up of large properties and the compulsory division of heritage among children in France. How fallacious were such notions! Living more than eighty years after the event, we know that the minute division of lands in France has reduced the country to a nation of ignorant peasant proprietors, who are biassed and guided by political adventurers and demagogues; so that healthy political action becomes an impossibility. The Fletchers, of course, did not foresee either this or the rise of an intermediate despotism under Napoleon, and they, perhaps, expressed themselves too freely on the possible benefits of the revolution. At all events, they were kept at a distance by many who would otherwise have befriended them; in point of fact, Archibald Fletcher's professional prospects were injured, though he continued to be generally esteemed for his upright conduct.

It was a great happiness to Mrs Fletcher to be visited by her father in 1792, and her happiness was increased the same year by the birth of her eldest son, Miles Angus Fletcher. This was the beginning of a flow of pleasant circumstances. 'In the spring of 1794, my father made us a present of an excellent house in Queen Street, No. 20, and came down himself in the summer with my aunt and Mrs Brudenell to spend a month or two with us. His little grandson, Miles, was now able to talk to him, and such was his delight in looking on this child that I could not find in my heart to refuse his request to take him along with them when they left us. . . . My father saw me surrounded with many blessings. . . . He saw that I had confided my happiness to one most deserving.' We pass over notices of the births of several other children, and also the distress caused by the death of Mr Dawson in 1798. Family prospects, however, begin to look up. A cottage at Morningside is taken for summer quarters. Here Mrs Fletcher is visited by an old friend, Mrs Millar, who had gone to America with her husband to escape political turmoil. The cure proved worse than the disease. Millar died, and his wife returned to Scotland with all her prospects clouded. 'She interested us much by her animated and graphic descriptions of America, and of men and manners in the United States. She had often seen and conversed with the greatest man of his age—General Washington, Philadelphia being then the seat of the Federal government. She described his demeanour as calm, mild, and dignified, and his domestic character as excellent.' In the spring of 1801, Mrs Fletcher accompanied her husband to London, her first visit to the metropolis. Here she becomes acquainted with Mrs Barbauld and the gifted Joanna Baillie at Hampstead. Speaking of Joanna, she says: 'I found her on a Sunday morning reading the Bible to her mother, a very aged lady, who was quite blind. Joanna's manners and accent were very Scottish, very kind, simple, and unaffected, but less frank than those of her elder sister. She seemed almost studiously to avoid literary conversation, but spoke with much interest of old Scotch friends and of her early days in Scotland. I was much interested

in her, having but a short time before read her *Plays on the Passions* with deep interest. . . . With the brilliancy and power of Mrs Barbauld's conversational talents my husband and I were greatly delighted. She took the same views that we did on public affairs, and had felt deeply, as we had done, disappointment in the disastrous turn of the French Revolution. . . . Mr Fletcher had at this time some interviews with his political friend, Mr Sheridan, whom, however, I did not see.'

Back to Edinburgh to look after her children, and to send her eldest boy to the High School, Mrs Fletcher touches a point in literary history. 'The latter part of the year 1802 was interesting to us in a public way by the commencement of the *Edinburgh Review*. We were fortunate enough to be acquainted more or less intimately with several of the earliest contributors—Brougham, Mr Jeffrey, Dr John Thomson, Mr John Allen, Francis Horner, and James Grahame, the author of *The Sabbath*. James Grahame was a much valued friend. He united to a highly refined and cultivated taste much general information, a very sincere and elevated piety, and the greatest simplicity of manners. I, who knew Edinburgh both before and after the appearance of the *Edinburgh Review*, can bear witness to the electrical effects of its publication on the public mind, and to the large and good results, in a political sense, that followed the circulation. The authorship of the different articles was discussed at every dinner-table; and I recollect a table-talk occurrence at our house which must have belonged to this year. Mr Fletcher, though not himself given to scientific inquiry or interests, had been so much struck with the logical and general ability displayed in an article of the young *Review* on Professor Black's Chemistry, that, in the midst of a few guests, of whom Henry Brougham was one, he expressed an opinion (while in ignorance as to the authorship) to the effect that the man who wrote that article might do or be anything he pleased. Mr Brougham, who was seated near me at table, stretched eagerly forward and said: "What, Mr Fletcher, be anything? May he be Lord Chancellor?" On which my husband repeated his words with emphasis: "Yes, Lord Chancellor, or anything he desires." This opinion seems to confirm Lord Cockburn's words concerning young Henry Brougham of the Speculative Society, that he even then "scented his quarry from afar."

We have next a somewhat droll anecdote of the gentle James Grahame, the poet of *The Sabbath*. Mrs Fletcher says he 'was so susceptible of the tender passion that he fell in love at first sight with a young lady whom he saw first ringing at our door, then No. 20 Queen Street. He came in a little afterwards, and asked me many questions about the dark-eyed beauty, who, he said, had thrown the "glamour over him." I invited him to meet her; she completed her conquest, and at the end of two months they were married.' About this time she began a friendly intimacy with Thomas Campbell, author of the *Pleasures of Hope*, adding: 'Life at this time glided on with us calmly and satisfactorily. My husband's professional emoluments, though very moderate, were amply sufficient for us, combined with my inheritance from my father's property, which was left to me in life, and was entailed on our children. We had no vanity to lead us into expense, our circle of acquaintance

was very limited, consisting chiefly of old professional friends of Mr Fletcher, their wives, and families—with occasional gleams of more literary and distinguished persons. Of these, was the Hon. Henry Erskine, whose wit, and whose graces of mind and manners, placed him at the head of good society in Edinburgh.* Her course of domestic life is thus described, and we may take it as that of a model wife and mother: 'I do not remember to have had any stirrings of worldly vanity or ambition. My delight in feeling that my sympathy in my husband's public feelings contributed much to his happiness, and my just pride in the lofty integrity of his character, and the affectionate kindness of his heart towards me and our children, formed my happiness. These children, too, were my "mirth and matter;" I was wrapped up in them; and though I never could command the patience that qualified me to be their teacher, I delighted in making them my happy and confidential companions.'

In 1804, it was a relief to learn that Mrs Brudenell had been relieved of the unworthy husband who had been the blight of her existence. Thankful to be rid of him, she put on no mourning, affected no grief. 'By his death, she became possessed of her hereditary estate of Hebburn, in Northumberland; and at her earnest desire, Mr Fletcher and I accompanied her to take possession of it. I think one of the most melancholy days of my life was that on which I accompanied this once gay and light-hearted woman to the hills and ruined castle of her ancestors. She who in youth had bounded over those fields the heiress of a fair domain, full of life, hope, and promise, now, at the age of sixty-six, came back a shattered, feeble old woman—without strength or spirits to enjoy the goods of fortune. She felt this incapacity of enjoyment with an intensity proportioned to the exquisite pleasure she would have had in being able to exercise hospitality, and to spread cheerfulness around her.' Such is the touching account of a life wrecked by an unfortunate marriage.

For the summer of 1810, the Fletchers occupied the pleasant country-house of Frankfield, about a mile above Lasswade. Here they met some interesting strangers. One evening, after Mrs Fletcher and her daughters had been weeping over the last chapter of *Clarissa Harlowe*, and could think and speak of nothing else, she says: 'We were sauntering about on a bank above the Esk, called the Whinny, when who should we meet but Professor Playfair, his then pupil Lord John Russell, Mrs Apreece, afterwards Lady Davy, and Miss Hannah Mackenzie (a daughter of the "Man of Feeling," Henry Mackenzie). This very agreeable party returned with us to drink tea to Frankfield, helping us to forget the creations of Richardson's genius in the sparkling vivacity of Mrs Apreece, and the taste and refinement of her companions.' In the autobiography there occur a number of agreeable snatches of this kind.

The authoress remarks that about 1812, a change for the better came over the social meetings in Edinburgh. 'Large dinner-parties were less frequent, and supper-parties—I mean hot suppers—were generally discarded. In their place came large evening-parties, where card-playing generally gave place to music or conversation. The company met at nine, and parted at twelve o'clock.

Tea and coffee were handed about at nine, and the guests sat down to some light cold refreshments later on in the evening; people did not in these parties meet to eat, but to talk and listen. There you would see a group (chiefly of ladies) listening to the brilliant talk of Mr Jeffrey; in a different part of the room, perhaps, another circle, amongst whom were pale-faced, reverential-looking students, lending their ears to the playful imaginative discussions of Dr Brown, while Professor Playfair would sometimes throw in an ingenious or quiet remark, that gave fresh animation to the discourse. On other occasions, old Mr Mackenzie would enliven the conversation with anecdotes of men and manners gone by.' We may contrast this rational and inexpensive method of spending the evenings, with what now prevails—ceremonious, heavy, and costly dinners, lasting from seven till ten o'clock, and devoid of any general intellectual converse; the whole thing usually a piece of show, which leaves no pleasing recollection, and is valueless for social intercourse.

Years pass on, and we are feelingly told by Mrs Fletcher of family bereavements, the first loss being that of Grace, the eldest daughter; the second, that of her husband, in 1828; and the next, that of Miles, her eldest son, in 1831. In the latter part of the autobiography, we are introduced to a number of literary personages, all of whom have latterly passed away. Not the least interesting portions of the work are the letters to and from intimate friends of the family. These letters, along with various notes, have been embodied in the text by Mrs Fletcher's daughter, Mary, Lady Richardson, wife of the arctic voyager. To her, as editress, the world may be said to be indebted for this very delightful book, which we commend for perusal to all who relish records of domestic affection and elevated principle.* Mrs Fletcher's life was drawn out beyond the span of ordinary existence, and though enduring some sorrows, she had the pleasure of enjoying many blessings, not the least of these being the advancement in life and happiness of her grandchildren. She died from exhaustion of nature, without any bodily pain, and in a gentle sleep, on the morning of the 5th February 1858, having then entered on her eighty-ninth year.

A TRIP BY RAIL IN THE TROPICS.

'HERE, mister; the colonel sent this to you and your friends with his compliments.'

It was an order for free transit for self and party to cross the Isthmus of Panama per rail. A most agreeable compliment too; for five pounds, the fare for a journey of forty-seven miles, was too heavy a sum to be thought of for a pleasure excursion.

'And I guess,' added the messenger, 'you'll have to be peart sharp, for she starts at five to the exact instant.'

Arrived at the station, and having presented our authority, and shaken hands with every official, from the guard to the porter, wearing a white skin, we take our seats in an empty van, the guard kindly placing chairs for us, and supplying us with cigars and his company. The town of Colon, or Aspinwall, or Navy Bay, for it rejoices in a

* *Autobiography of Mrs Fletcher.* Edited by the Survivor of the Family. Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas. 1875.

variety of nomenclature, was our point of departure. How we got away without destruction to human life, is one of the things that remain unanswered, for the line runs through the only street which constitutes the town, close to the houses; and as every house is an hotel, and every hotel crowded both within and without; and as human beings black and white, mixed with dogs, pigs, and turkey buzzards, crossed the rails in every direction—it still remains a puzzle how we cleared the town without accident. However, we did so, without even touching a feather of a crowd of turkey buzzards that are holding high carnival. Talking of turkey buzzards, these birds flourish wherever garbage exists, floating almost motionless at an immense altitude in the clear blue tropical sky. They detect carrion from afar by their keen powers of vision, and a dead horse or ox is soon a seething mass of fowls, eating until gorged, when they lazily hop away, to make room for fresh arrivals.

The first portion of the rail to Panama runs through a deep mangrove swamp; heavy and green, the tangled roots and branches swarm over the poisonous waters, which ever exhale the death-bearing malaria; here and there the mangroves leave open spaces, which are greedily seized upon by gigantic reeds and rushes, netted and intertwined by water-lilies. At intervals, mighty trees, leafless, black, and gnarled, stand alone, shewing the pestiferous effects of the swamp; but these are not unadorned; from every bough hang ferns and orchids of various and beautiful growth; conspicuous among the latter is the Santo-spirito, with its down-like pistil and stamens. The dangers attending the laying out of this railway were so great that it required no great stretch of imagination to comprehend the statement, that every 'sleeper,' on that part of the line at all events, cost a human life!

Hérons, bitterns, and wild-ducks find a home here, not to speak of water-lizards, snakes, and alligators. Onward we speed, now through swamp, now through ancient forest, where the gigantic silk-cotton tree spreads its magnificent branches to the sky, yet seems almost swallowed up by parasites, which in festoons hang from its boughs, or writhe like snakes round the stem. Clouds of parrots and parakeets fly across us, screaming most inharmoniously, drowning the sound of the steam-trumpet, as it announces our arrival at Monkey Hill Station. Here we stop to take in water, for all the water for Colon must be brought from Monkey Hill. On again through the tropical forest. Our next station was Lion Hill, called so, probably, because there are no lions there. However, as far as roaring is concerned, the absence of the king of beasts is immaterial, for the Howling Monkey (*Myceles ursinus*) keeps up a continual concert in the woods. The stranger is indeed at first startled by the sound, as, from its depth and loudness, the cry very much resembles that of the larger carnivora.

The kindly offer of the station-master to take us in charge for the day and shew us some of the wonders of the forest, determined us to remain, and go on by the afternoon train. Our host turned out to be a Scotchman; his speech betrayed him at once, for the pleasant north-country accent still hung on his tongue, though his expressions, from some years of absence from his native hills, were not in every instance Doric. With him we got on

famously, and ere we parted, we were on the most familiar terms. A great collector of natural history specimens was Mac—not, indeed, that he knew much about them, but then they were worth so many dollars to non-scientific collectors. How he had pitched here with his wife and comely daughter, I know not. Whether it was that auld lang syne affected the maiden's heart, or the sight of a young man (for dried-up Yankees were her only acquaintances) was pleasant to her sight, it is not for this historian to say; but whatever the cause, through Jenny I obtained from her father some rare specimens, chief amongst which was the King Fly-catcher (*Muscivora Mexicana*).

A hurried luncheon of salt-fish and bananas, and gun in hand, we sallied out into the sombre forest. Flocks of black 'witches' (*Crotophaga*) accompanied us on our way; green parrots screeched in every direction; trogons whistled softly in the shade; golden orioles popped in and out of their nests, which hung like purses from the tips of the branches; the magnificent scarlet woodpecker hammered away, recalling to mind Mr Moule and Mrs Gamp. Deep in the forest roared the howling monkeys. And such a forest! Trees, the lowermost branches of which surpassed in size the trunks of our largest elms; and so dense their foliage, that in places the gloom approached to darkness. Underneath, flourished the cactus and aloe, presenting an absolutely impenetrable barrier to the wanderer, except where the deer or other wild animal had wound through.

Ninety degrees in the shade soon becomes intolerable even to the most enthusiastic of wild Nature's worshippers, especially when the mid-day siesta has become a habit; even the birds retire at noon, and silence falls on the forest for the next three or four hours. In the middle of the forest is a solitary dwelling, inhabited by a solitary personage whom Mac knew, and by whom we were introduced. He welcomed us to his abode and invited us to the hospitality it afforded. After our forest-rambling, it was pleasant to lounge in the cool verandah, jalousied, to admit the air without the sun. Cigars, coffee, and American rocking-chairs added to the comfort.

'Would any one like a hammock?' asked our host. Yes, one of us would. A grass hammock was accordingly fetched, and about to be slung, when out sprang a small snake, and glided away.

'Nesty vermin; I hate them,' said Mac. 'I always shudder at them, since an adventure I had this very time last year.'

'An adventure; what was it?' from everybody.

'Weel,' returned our Scotch host (warming up at the recollection of something, and giving free play to many Scotticisms, the greater number of which I now forget), 'I call it an adventure at anyrate. Ye see, I had been out all the morning with the gun—Jenny minding the signals, and as I was returning, I stopped down bye at the brook to have a dip. The day was melting. The path to it was shady, and runs through a grove of mango bushes, and being fond o' the fruit, I was looking for it wherever I saw a likely tree. Weel, I picked and ate, and better picked and ate, till I could eat no longer, and had just pulled the last, when what should dart down from the tree, full at my face, but one of these nesty black constructors. Luckily I put up my right hand and caught him by the neck before he had time to

bite. I knew the vermin weel, and had shot plenty o' them, and to tell the real truth, their hug's waur than their bite, for they don't belong to the poisonous kind. But they are fashious enough for all that, for if they come to close grips, it takes a pretty stout chiel to untwist them.' Here our worthy host paused to refresh, a few moments being allowed for the operation.

'Weel, ye see, I was telling ye about the constructor,' continued Mac (persisting in the *u*), 'and mind ye, what I'm telling is a true bill.'

'Proceed, Mac; we're all attention.'

'Weel, as I had the vermin safe by the neck, I didna fash myself very much, beyond wonderin' whether I would kill him or take him home alive. Mind ye, all the time he was dabbin' an' dabbin' at me, wi' that forked tongue o' his glintin' in and out o' his ugly mouth, like the telegraph needles. Kill him, thinks I. But first to swing him off, for by this time he had the grip, and wasna like to yield. I soon found that there were twa to that game. Try as I might, my gentleman would not budge an inch. I tried my full strength, but na. I cried to Jenny to fetch something, for I was not far off the station, but she never heard. I was beginning not to like the way things were going, for the beast was grippin' aye the closer, and the arm that held him was getting tired. Besides, the grip was round the other arm, which I could only move below the elbow. The beast was coiled over my left shoulder, then round under my right arm, and then across my waist, binding, as I've told ye, my left arm. If once I let go, I knew he would strangle me, and to tell the truth, I could not hold out much longer. I always carried a knife, which I knew was in the pocket of the flannel shirt I was wearing, and my only chance lay in getting at it. I could just reach it by bending my left arm, and I daurna let go the right. And as I fumb'l't and fumb'l't it gave me a terrible turn to find that the vermin had steekit my pocket as firm as if it had been sewn up. That made me grue.'

'Excuse me a moment, Mac,' interrupted I. 'What do you mean by "steekit"?''

'Steekit? Weel, I fancy it's the plain English for shut, or maybe closed.'

'Thank you, Mac; your northern English is capital. But there was another—let me see'—

'What? "Made me grue"?''

'Ah, that's it—"made me grue." What's "grew"?''

'Were ye ever in an ugly fix and didn't know how to get out of it?' returned Mac, characteristically.

'Many a time,' I replied; 'and indeed such a fix as the one you are describing would have made my flesh creep.'

'That's it,' cried Mac; 'it would have *made ye grue*.—Weel, I was just comin' to the bit, when the gentleman interrupted me. My right wrist was getting weaker and weaker with holding the snake, and faith, the constructor knew it as he girmed and hissed at me, and darted fire out o' these ugly een o' his. I was sair left to mysel. Thinks I: "Mac, ye've got your match at last." I didna care so much for my chest, for all his cuddlin'; but my throat, once round that, and I would have said: "Mac, ye're a dead man!" All this time, the vermin was trying to get to my throat, and as I found him winding up, the perspiration broke over

me. What was to become o' the wife and Jenny—and me awa? That was an anxious thocht to me at the time. Weel, just as my gentleman was working for my throat wi' his coils, he gave my pocket the slip, and left it free. I felt my arm growing strong again. "Feel for the knife now, Mac," says I to myself, and in two cracks it was in my hand. Then bending my head to meet my hand—I know the brute thocht I was done—I unclasped the gully with my teeth, and in an instant after, it was slipped in between him and my body, with the edge turned out.'

'Just in time, Mac,' said I, 'for I think the snake was having the best of it.'

'Ay, ye're richt there, sir; but if I got a fright, yon constructor got anither, for in a jiffie I had him in two halves! I must have got an unco fleg; and the last thing I mind, was something going off like a paper poke. When I came to out o' my dwam—for I had fainted richt off—the vermin was bye with it—past any more capers—and Jenny says to this day, I may be thankfu' the beast didna stang me.—But now, gentlemen, it's time we were moving towards the station, if you wish to catch the next train.'

So, after thanking our solitary host and bidding him adieu, we wound our way back again to the railway, and just as the train was moving off, with us cosily seated in the van, Mac whispered: 'If ever ye're in Tillicultry, just speer for'—

But what followed was drowned by noise, and so we left Mac and his wife and comely daughter, and proceeded on our way.

Paraiso Station, the last on the line, was our destination, where we were to stop for the night. The sun had sunk behind the hills when we reached it; and after coffee and the everlasting bananas, we 'fixed' ourselves as best we might for rest and sleep. Daybreak found us fresh and ready for our start up the mountains. A small hand-cart, worked by four negroes, awaited us on the rails outside, and whilst the gloom of night still clung to valley and hill, we set out, bowling along at a good twelve miles an hour. Paraiso Station is on the decline towards Panama, to which we turned our backs, and a few minutes brought us to the highest part of the line; here a little mountain stream divided into two streamlets, one winding its way to be lost in the broad Atlantic, the other coursing in the opposite direction, to add its mite to the waters of the Pacific. Troops of deer, tempted by the young grass along the line, dashed into the bush as we rattled by. A three-toed sloth obstructed our path for a moment, but was quickly accommodated with a seat in our car—doubtless, he never travelled so fast in his life before. The sun was just gilding the tops of the forest when we stopped our rapid journey, and leaving the slender track of civilisation behind, we plunged into the bush. Hot and fatiguing was our toil through bush and forest; through deep ravines, where the sun's rays never pierced; round the crests of cliffs all covered with the most luxuriant vegetation, as we breasted the mighty range of the Cordilleras.

It was with a sense of considerable relief that we completed our walk at noon, and lay down to rest under the pleasant shade of a banana leaf-roof. We were now in a clearing in the great primeval forest: a mountain-stream gurgled its tortuous way at our feet, limpid pure water, running over

golden sands; and under the influence of 'yellow fever,' this clearing had been made. Unfortunately for the prospectors, though gold did undeniably exist, there was too little of it, and the place was deserted—a couple of vagrant negroes taking up their residence in the neglected sheds. It was something new to us to wash for gold; so, after a short rest, we got the negroes and the washing apparatus into the stream; but even gold at the rate of sixpence-worth in the hour is not remunerative, so a couple of hours under a broiling sun satisfied our curiosity.

There is something very solemn in the night stillness of the tropics. As evening falls, the forest sounds change with the hour; the shrieking of the parrots is exchanged for the monotonous chirping of the tree-crickets, or the melancholy hoot of the owl; and the wail of the goat-suckers is followed by the howling of the ocelot. All the strange sounds seem to make more weirdly the weird stillness. Sleep was impossible. The strangeness of scene, for, in the clear starlight, the surrounding forest was visible like a black fortress on every side; the eerie sounds; and last, but not least, the mosquitoes. If ever there existed an item created for no conceivable object, the mosquito surely is one. With no protection other than some rails to keep out midnight visitors, they besieged us in thousands, their horrid ping-ping being almost as annoying as their bite. What seems most curious about these torments is, that they are to be found far away from the haunts of any animal on which they could possibly feed, yet they pounce upon the first unfortunate visitor as if his blood were their daily accustomed rations. What curious instinct guides them? and what did they live on previously?

The gur-gur of the wild turkey was a delightful salutation as the day broke; and we started early on our return journey, in order to do some shooting; but little else than the sound was our reward for tearing through the cruel under-wood; and on our arrival at the station, our bag consisted of one hen-turkey, a Curaçao bird, a couple of brace of partridge, a toucan, and two squirrels. As to our clothes, the greater portion was left in small fragments on the cactus and wait-a-bit thorns; in fact, every growing thing in the tropics appears to have thorns—from the aloe, with spears to every leaf, down to the tiny creeping mimosa, which closes its leaves at the very tread of the pedestrian.

Back again to the town (for Colon is called a town) of hotels and aroma, convoyed by our friend the guard, who shakes hands with us, as if years of intimate friendship had existed. I must not forget, however, the very last of our Scotch friend at Lion Hill, as the train stopped for a few moments at that station on its return journey.

'Well, Mac, here we are again, you see.'

'Ay, gentlemen, and a good journey to you; and as I was saying to ye, if ever ye happen to be at Tillicoultry—just ask for—Angus Macfarlane.'

Colon at last.

'Have a liquor, guard?'

'Wal, I calc'late I could hide a drain.'

'Tall or short?'

'Now, mister, I guess I have a thirst on me that I wouldn't sell for five dollars.'

So the barman having brewed a tall sangaree for

the guard, and a short cocktail for the rest of us all round, we shake hands again most affectionately, and return to our tubs and civilisation on board our ship, which was now getting up steam, and in an hour hence would be plunging the deep waters of the Spanish Main.

DARLING DOREL.

[Dorothea Sibylla, daughter of John George, Margrave and Elector of Brandenburg, married John, Duke of Brieg, in 1610. She is described as a pattern of goodness, common-sense, virtue, and piety, and on account of her kind and genial ways was universally beloved. Children were her especial delight, and whenever she passed through the town of Brieg, they would welcome with infinite zest their bountiful benefactress. The following verses shew how the Duchess of Brieg came to be called the *Darling Dorel*.]

SHE came with her innocent beauty and grace,
An angel in heart and an angel in face,
As quaintly the old German chronicles tell
The picturesque story of Darling Dorel.

Some faces are bright like the sunbeam of day,
Wherever they shine the clouds vanish away,
While Sorrow's pale phantom glides back to its cell;
And such was the face of the Darling Dorel.

Some hearts are so full of the treasures of love,
The beautiful gifts of the Giver above,
Their riches o'erflow into others as well;
And such was the heart of the Darling Dorel.

Some lives are like chords under music's control,
Each incident harmony blends with the whole,
Until on the ear in full concord they swell;
And such was the life of the Darling Dorel.

Whenever she passed through the streets of the town,
No story-book queen with a sceptre and crown,
But gifted with graces that none could excel,
The natural guards of the Darling Dorel,

Her ladies would bring with them comfits and toys
For the bright little maidens and brave little boys,
While the children would follow love's magical spell,
And hasten to welcome their Darling Dorel.

The Duchess knew not of her pretty new name,
Though far it was spread by the heralds of fame,
Till at length, as it happened, one day it befell
That she learned they called her the Darling Dorel.

'Twas breathed by a child's yet impolitic lips,
Which often the wisdom of sages eclipse;
The Princess had asked if her name she could tell;
'Your name,' said the child, 'is the Darling Dorel.'

The courtiers all stared, half in wonder, half sport;
Such a name savoured more of the cot than the court,
But their mistress said, smiling through tears: 'It is
well;
Henceforth let them call me the Darling Dorel.

'The proudest of titles that monarchs can shew
Are those which the love of their people bestow;
And not for an emperor's crown would I sell
The title mine give me of Darling Dorel.'

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